

Research to Real Life 2006

Innovations in Deaf-Blindness



DB-LINK

**National Information Clearinghouse
on Children Who Are Deaf-Blind**

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Managing editor: Gail Leslie

Contributing Writers: Gail Leslie, Peggy Malloy, Betsy McGinnity, John Reiman.

Cover Illustration

A Bunch of Red Flowers

Brian Helton

Helen Keller School
Ala. Institute for the Deaf and Blind
Teacher: Stephanie McGhee
Medium: Watercolor

Learning To Learn

A Systematic Child-Centered Model for Skill Development in Young Children

As children grow and develop, their skills and abilities increasingly allow them to become masters of their own domain. Grabbing for a favorite toy, finding a much loved book on the shelf, climbing up the slide or opening the box of cookies indicate a growing awareness of the world and the people and objects that occupy it. To develop fundamental communication and cognitive skills, children who are deaf-blind require environments that allow them to take in new information, respond to it and act on it appropriately. They require individualized instruction and families and professionals who understand their ability to learn. *Learning to Learn* brings together materials developed through a series of research projects to create an instructional model that identifies classroom activities and environments that simultaneously target the development of communication and cognitive skills. Easily understood inventories are used to assess these skills. Additional materials, including the *Design to Learn* inventory, assist in designing learning activities that target communication and cognitive development within environments that provide natural opportunities.

The *Learning to Learn* Model has four components:

- Assessing the Child
- Developing a Learning Plan
- Teaching & Learning
- Monitoring Performance to Promote Progress

[This link provides a good visual of the Model](#)

COMPONENTS

- Assessment data is provided by parents and educational professionals.
- Individualized instruction focuses learning on materials and activities that are intrinsically motivating to the student.
- Communication and physical environments are designed to provide natural opportunities to learn new skills and to practice existing ones.
- The student's performance and the learning environment are monitored to evaluate instructional progress.
- Instructional strategies target the student's understanding of communication and concepts as well as the physical demonstration of those skills.

KEY PRACTICES

- Parent involvement in the assessment process helps to create a more complete picture of the learner and results in greater collaboration between parents and teachers in setting instructional goals.
- Assessment instruments that are pragmatic, that use terminology that is meaningful to parents and teachers, lead to the development of more individualized instructional objectives.
- Targeted instruction, in combination with contexts and materials that are motivating to the learner, can provide the critical experience and the intrinsic motivation that are essential to a child's ability to learn something new.
- Focusing teacher attention on aspects of the physical and social environment that encourage learning is directly related to progress in gaining communication and social skills for children with sensory impairments.

PRODUCTS

The Learning to Learn model brings together a number of materials, all of which are available from the Design to Learn website <http://www.designtolearn.com/pages/D2Lpackage.html>

Materials Related to Communication Development

- [Communication Matrix](#)
- [Communication Matrix...Especially for Parents](#)
- [First Things First](#)
- [Tangible Symbol Systems Book](#)
- [Tangible Symbol Systems DVD](#)

Materials Related to Concept Development

- [School Inventory of Problem Solving Skills](#)
- [Home Inventory of Problem Solving Skills](#)
- [Hands-On Problem Solving for Children with Multiple Disabilities: Guide to Assessment and Teaching Strategies](#)
- [Problem Solving Posters](#)
- [Hands-On Learning at Home](#)
- [Hands-On Learning at School](#)
- [A Teacher's Guide to Hands-On Learning](#)

Materials Related to the Learning Environment

- [Design to Learn Book](#)
- [Design to Learn DVD](#)

Integrative Materials Specifically for the Learning to Learn Package

- [Guide to the Design to Learn Model and Instructional Materials](#)
- [On The Same Page](#)

Project SALUTE

Successful Adaptations for Learning to Use Touch Effectively

Touch is an important means of communication and learning for children who are deaf-blind. Over the years, parents, teachers, and experts have used tactile strategies—strategies that use the sense of touch—to help children who are deaf-blind learn and experience the world. Ideas about learning through touch are often shared from person-to-person and individual strategies are included in articles and books, but until recently, comprehensive information about tactile strategies had not been gathered or thoroughly evaluated. Project SALUTE was created to address this need. The project looked at existing published materials, interviewed experts and family members, and conducted research with a small number of children. Through this process, it identified and evaluated a variety of tactile strategies and developed materials and guidelines to help families and teachers choose the best strategies for individual children. The focus of the project was on children who have very limited vision in addition to hearing loss and other disabilities.

KEY PRACTICES

- There are many different ways to help children learn through touch. It is important to use an individualized approach to choose the best activities and materials for each child's unique learning style.
- Children learn best when teaching occurs during everyday routines and activities, in familiar places, and when real items are used instead of artificial ones (e.g., a real orange instead of a plastic one).
- Children should not be forced to manipulate objects or participate in tactile activities. They should be approached gently, respectfully, and with sensitivity and given plenty of time to receive tactile information.
- In addition to helping children learn through touch, the use of other senses should be promoted. Tactile learning should support what children learn through vision and hearing. The use of adaptive devices (e.g., hearing aids, eyeglasses) should be encouraged as needed.
- Routines and repetition of activities help children learn new concepts and skills. It is important to make sure that tactile information is consistently presented and is easily accessible at school, home, and other places a child spends time.

PRODUCTS

Web site: <http://www.projectsalute.net>. (Information sheets on the web site are available in both English and Spanish.)

Manual: *Successful Adaptations for Learning to Use Touch Effectively: Interacting with Children Who Are Deaf-Blind or Visually Impaired and Have Additional Disabilities*, by Deborah Chen, June Downing, Lavada Minor, & Gloria Rodriguez-Gil. New York: AFB Press, (in press). [Note: title will probably change.]

Book: *Tactile Strategies for Children with Visual Impairments and Multiple Disabilities: Promoting Communication and Learning Skills* by Deborah Chen & June Downing. New York: AFB Press (<http://www.afb.org>), 2006. Cost: \$39.95.

Video: *Tactile Learning Strategies: Interacting with Children Who Have Visual Impairments and Multiple Disabilities*, by Deborah Chen & June Downing. New York: AFB Press (<http://www.afb.org>), 2006. (Video—62 minutes; English and Spanish versions are included on the same videotape.) Cost: \$79.95.

Project SPARKLE

Supporting Access to Resources, Knowledge, Linkages and Education

Parents of children who are deafblind require tools that can be used anytime (day/night) in the development and education of their children at home, and that can be shared with educators, service providers, and extended family members. Project SPARKLE is a unique model of individualized learning developed in response to requests from families. SPARKLE provides readily accessible and practical information that builds the capacity of families to effectively assist in their children's education. SPARKLE combines DVD technology and the Internet to make deafblind-specific information, training, materials, and resources available on demand, and enables families to network nationwide.

PROJECT COMPONENTS/PRODUCTS

- The SPARKLE **training program** is provided to parents by means of DVD technology and is supported by a parent guidebook and the SPARKLE Web site at <http://www.sparkle.usu.edu>. The training program focuses on deafblindness, vision, hearing, touch, concept development, intervention, and communication.
- The **child profile** is a database program that supports the family in collecting data and information specific to their child. They can then share this profile with educational teams, service providers, medical personnel, and others.
- The SPARKLE Web site has a Family Room component where parents can access an evolving collection of family stories for inspiration, **networking and support**. Also, the SPARKLE Listserv helps parents interact with each other to share ideas, information, and encouragement.
- The SPARKLE Web site has a Video Library component where parents can **access video presentations** delivered by experts in the field of deafblindness related to topics such as orientation & mobility, central auditory processing, transition and family issues.
- Each participating state has a facilitator who is affiliated with the state deafblind project and who can provide appropriate guidance, **ongoing support**, and resources to families.
- The SPARKLE Web site has a glossary of terms and a **resource section** with links to related Web sites. It also has a unique video library where parents can watch presentations by professionals about deafblindness.

KEY PRACTICES

Updated information on deafblindness, vision, hearing, touch, concept development, intervention, and communication that is delivered through a combination of DVD technology, a parent guidebook, and a website, enables parents to:

- be informed and empowered participants in their children's educational program;
- assist in the generation of IEP and transition goals;
- conveniently access and utilize information whenever they need it at home;
- assemble a continuously refined child-specific resource/file that can be reviewed and used at later times;
- introduce, use, apply, and share information with their child's team members (i.e., teachers, intervenors, aides, etc.) and to have a role in training;
- introduce, use, apply, and share information with family members (grandparents, siblings, etc.);
- generate topics and focal points for parent-to-parent conference calls and listservs;
- contribute information to the development of family advocacy training tools;
- provide information for their transition-age youth to bring and share with service providers;
- contribute information that assists in the selection of appropriate test and assessment measures.

Currently, more than 200 families in 18 states (Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and Virginia) are participating in Project SPARKLE.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/PRODUCTS, CONTACT:

Website: www.sparkle.usu.edu

Utah State University, 6500 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-6500

Toll Free: 1-888-800-1487 (Mon-Fri, 8:00am to 5:00pm MT)

Tel: (435) 797-5600

Fax: (435) 797-5580

Bringing It All Back Home

Family-Driven Assessment and Intervention for Children who are Deaf-Blind

Parents are natural observers of their children and, as a result, know a tremendous amount about their child's skills, interests and personality. Because they see their child at home and in multiple environments, they have an understanding of their child's growing awareness and development. Parents of children who are deaf-blind are often called upon to contribute these observations to formal evaluations as part of the special education process. Their role in this process is often quite limited. They essentially assume secondary roles in the evaluation process by serving as sources of information to professionals, rather than as active participants in the observation, analysis, and interpretation of their child's behaviors. They may even be less involved in determining the contexts and strategies for intervention. Parents and caregivers are often the most consistent people in the child's life and their long-term perspective and vested interest can be an invaluable asset to the team, especially during transition points. The general purpose of the project, *BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME: Family-Driven Assessment and Intervention for Children who are Deaf-Blind*, was to promote the active involvement of parents and care providers in the educational assessment and program planning of their children with deaf-blindness.

COMPONENTS

Specifically, this project sought to develop a family-driven approach to assessment and intervention for the child who is deaf-blind by:

- improving the abilities of parents and care providers to observe their children's cognitive, communication, social, and problem solving skills across natural home and community activities;
- recognizing and enhancing the roles of parents in the formal process of educational planning for their children by helping family members to identify intervention priorities, as well as everyday opportunities for intervention;
- strengthening the parents' role in overseeing successful transitions as their children proceed through the educational service system.



KEY PRACTICES

- The primary purposes of educational assessments are to help identify appropriate goals, consider relevant interventions, strategies and activities.
- Assessment should document skills and changes as they occur in typical settings.
- Assessments should include anecdotal information about skills and behaviors not observed in schools.
- When parents and care givers are actively involved in evaluating the child, it promotes the family's sense of self-determination.
- Information gathered through the use of a formal assessment instrument like HomeTalk, is more readily accepted as "valid" by professionals.

PRODUCTS

HomeTalk is an assessment tool for parents and care providers of children who are deaf-blind and have other disabilities. It is designed to help them participate in their children's education by giving them a way to provide a broad picture of a child's skills, special interests, and personality. It is available in English and in Spanish.

The purpose of this four part assessment is to promote parents' active involvement in the assessment of their children and the planning of their children's educational program.

HomeTalk is designed to be used by parents to:

- help develop an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)
- review their child's progress and needs at a school meeting
- introduce their child to new staff members
- summarize important information about their child

Available to download at the following web site

<http://www.designtolearn.com/pages/hometalk.html>

Bringing It All Back Home was supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to Oregon Institute on Disability & Development, Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, OR and College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University New York, NY from September 1, 1998 to August 31, 2003 (Grant# H324M980032). Project Co-Directors: Charity Rowland, Ph.D. and Philip Schweigert, M.Ed.

Project PRIIDE **Providing Resources through Interactive Instruction in** **Deafblind Education**

When children experience combined hearing and vision loss, their access to the world around them is significantly impacted. Their ability to learn and to interact depends largely on the support and imagination of those responsible for guiding their development. Project PRIIDE (Providing Resources through Interactive Instruction in Deafblind Education) uses innovations in DVD technology to provide information and instruction to help families, teachers, service providers, and medical personnel gain a better understanding of the experience of deafblindness. The DVD allows for simulations of the full range of vision and hearing losses and for combining types of sensory loss to create customized simulations of dual sensory impairment. These simulations are situated in classroom, instructional, and day-to-day environments and illustrate the impact of deafblindness on a child's ability to learn and to communicate. The program has proven to be a successful tool for parents and educators. Having a very concrete experience of what deafblindness means for an individual child has improved the ability of both families and teachers to provide successful accommodations and adaptations at home and in the classroom. Project PRIIDE's DVD-training program consists of three curriculum areas which are captioned for the hearing impaired and can be accessed in English or Spanish.

Components of the DVD Product

Vision Loss. Provides information and simulations of types of vision loss, including a multi-angle feature that allows the viewer to choose between the vision loss simulation and normal vision. A user can move from types of loss (i.e. acuity loss, field loss) to associated syndromes and conditions.

Hearing Loss. Provides information and simulations of varying types of hearing loss and accompanying audiograms. The impact of environmental issues, noise and distance, on hearing is demonstrated as well as the impact of hearing loss on the development of speech. A database of terms associated with hearing loss is also available.

Deafblindness. Demonstrates, through combined simulations of vision and hearing loss, the state of deafblindness. The program allows the viewer to select from various types of vision loss in combination with various types of hearing loss and to experience a range of environments from that perspective. Additional information related to communication, intervention, etc. are featured.

Curricular features. A dictionary of terms and definitions of syndromes and disorders provides an encyclopedic information base related to vision loss, hearing loss and deafblindness with suggested accommodations and environmental modifications. Simulations, support and resource information, and interactive quizzes exist for each of the areas as well.



KEY PRACTICES

- DVD technology is a useful tool for the simulation of sensory loss.
- Technology can be used to demonstrate the unique experience and impact of deafblindness, independent of specialists or experts.
- Simulation of the combined hearing and vision loss particular to the deafblind student leads to greater understanding of the needs of the student.
- Simulation of the combined hearing and vision loss particular to the deafblind student makes for more successful accommodations and adaptations.
- Families use the DVD to successfully advocate for their child and to create understanding of the child's perceptual abilities and needs.
- DVD technology is available to deafblind, blind or deaf/hard of hearing consumers for self advocacy.
- DVD technology makes simulations readily available to a wide variety of audiences including educational teams, teachers, related service providers, early interventionists, families, paraprofessionals, administrators, medical personnel, personnel preparation programs and private industry.
- The fields of deafblindness, deafness, and blindness, nationally and internationally, are able to use the simulations to benefit consumers.

Products

DVD: *Sensory Perspectives*, SKI-HI Institute, Utah State University, 2003. This set of two DVD's can be viewed in English or Spanish with closed captioning. Available from HOPE, Inc., 1856 North 1200 East, North Logan, UT 84321. Phone: 435-245-2888. E-mail: hope@hopepubl.com. Publisher's web site: <http://www.skihi.org/>

Including Students With Deafblindness In Large Scale Assessment Systems

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA 2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) have shaped educational practices for students with disabilities. Education reform has focused attention on performance and accountability for all students posing significant challenges for educators of students with low-incidence disabilities including students who are deafblind, a highly diverse group of learners. Federal legislation mandates that data on their progress be reported at school, district, and state levels. For most states, this has required the development of new, alternate assessment systems that include students who have not previously been part of state-wide assessments.

States have been allowed to develop their own standards and procedures to meet the requirements set forth in the law, leading to variations in assessment and accommodation policies.

To learn more about how students with deafblindness fare in large-scale assessment systems, the Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute-UCE at the University of Kentucky conducted a three-year multi-state investigation. The project collaborated with state deaf-blind projects in three states: Kentucky, Louisiana, and Tennessee. The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What are the exemption rates for students who are deafblind in large-scale assessments?
- 2) How do student scores in both alternate and general assessment compare with their peers both with and without disabilities?
- 3) How are accommodations for students participating in the general assessment determined, implemented and with what result?
- 4) To what extent do the performance standards for the alternate assessment correlate with indices of best practices for students who are deafblind?
- 5) To what extent do student scores in their final year of school correlate with positive outcomes upon graduation?
- 6) To what extent are teachers of students who are deafblind modifying their curricular and instructional practices to align with the assessment?

COMPONENTS

Assessment Participation – Examination of the participation and performance of students who are deaf-blind in alternate assessments in the three participating states.

Accommodations Study – Analysis of the use of accommodations by nine students with deafblindness during participation in the general education curriculum and during assessment.

Quality Indicators Study – Analysis of the educational programs of 25 students with deafblindness to examine the relationship between alternate assessments and classroom instruction.

State Deaf-Blind Project Coordinator Study – Survey of 52 state deafblind project coordinators to gain an understanding of their knowledge of and involvement with their state's large-scale assessment systems.

Intervention Study – Evaluation of an intervention designed to increase the knowledge and skills of teachers of students with deafblindness to promote improvement in alternate assessment scores.

KEY PRACTICES

- 85–90% of students with deafblindness participate in state alternate assessment systems but the development of reliable and valid alternate assessment strategies for students who are deafblind with cognitive disabilities is a consistent challenge.
- Students who are deafblind have unique sensory and communication needs. Accommodations must meet the specific needs of each student and accommodations used both in the classroom and during the assessment should be documented in the IEP to insure consistency.
- There is a need for greater communication between parents and teachers and between teachers and vision and hearing specialists throughout the assessment process.
- Students who have opportunities to develop communication and social skills have higher scores on state assessment systems. Universal Design for Learning, modifying content to match each student's mode of communication, natural supports and opportunities to develop relationships connect educational programs for students who are deafblind to expected assessment outcomes.

- Technical assistance and training for teachers of students who are deafblind and school administrators, particularly in the area of instructional strategies, impact student performance on large-scale assessments.
- State deaf-blind project coordinators are in a unique position to offer expertise on development and implementation of state alternate assessment systems that insure improved outcomes for students with deafblindness.

PRODUCTS

Website:

Detailed outline of research questions, methodology and findings.

<http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/kydb-research/Default.htm>

White Paper:

Including Students with Deafblindness in Large-Scale Assessment Systems

Articles:

Clayton, Jean; Burdge, Michael; Denham, Anne; Kleinert, Harold L.; Kearns, Jacqui. (2006). A Four-Step Process for Accessing the General Curriculum for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, (38)5, 20-27.

Horvath, Leah S.; Kampfer-Bohach, Stephanie; Kearns, Jacqueline Farmer. (2005). The Use of Accommodations Among Students with Deafblindness in Large-Scale Assessment Systems. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, (16)3, 177- 187.

Towles-Reeves, Elizabeth; Kampfer-Bohach, Stephanie; Garrett, Brent; Kearns, Jacqueline F.; Grisham-Brown, Jennifer. (2006). Are We Leaving Our Children Behind?: State Deaf-Blind Coordinators' Perceptions of Large-Scale Assessment. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, (17)1, 40-48.

White, Maria Thomas; Garrett, Brent; Kearns, Jacqueline Farmer; Grisham-Brown, Jennifer. (2003). Instruction and Assessment: How Students With Deaf-Blindness Fare in Large-Scale Alternate Assessments. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, (28)4, 205-213.

Including Students with Deafblindness in Large Scale Assessments was funded by the U.S. Department of Education to The Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute-UCE at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY from October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2002 (Grant # H324D990044). Co-Principal Investigators: Jacqui Kearns, Ed.D. and Jennifer Grisham-Brown, Ed.D.

DB-LINK
The Teaching Research Institute
Western Oregon University
345 North Monmouth Avenue
Monmouth, OR 97361

Phone: 800-438-9376
TTY: 800-854-7013
Fax: 503-838-8150
E-mail: dblink@tr.wou.edu
Website: www.dblink.org